

our job as legislators to make sure they are taken care of when they return home, that we honor their sacrifices, their duty, and their courage. We are not doing our job if soldiers are forced to return to civilian life within a week of returning home from theater.

I have been out to Walter Reed, as have many of my colleagues, and seen our soldiers recovering from horrific wounds suffered in this conflict. One of the soldiers from Arkansas had taken a rocket-propelled grenade directly to his chest. You would not have known it, though, from talking to him. He was proud of the work he and his fellow soldiers had been doing in Iraq. He missed his unit and was ready to return to them and finish the rebuilding process they had begun.

As I left his room, one of the nurses approached one of my staffers and said that while many of the soldiers were doing very well, she was very concerned for them once they got back to their homes, into their communities, trying to readjust themselves to a way of life from which they had been absent while they were in Iraq, while they were experiencing events that oftentimes only they could think of in their own hearts.

Many of them underwent daily therapy sessions where they discussed these experiences with their fellow soldiers. Unfortunately for our guardsmen and reservists, they do not come back to a base where they are surrounded by people who have had a similar experience, people to whom they can talk, people with whom they can empathize, those who can understand the unbelievable circumstances and situations they experienced in Iraq.

The nurse was also concerned that what they were receiving in the hospital there would all end once they returned to their hometowns—the therapy, the discussions, certainly the medical treatment.

Imagine you are a soldier who, thankfully, has made it home from Iraq or Afghanistan without serious injury, the joyousness of coming home to your home, to your family, to your community, and upon returning to a pace of life 180 degrees from anything you have witnessed within the last year and a half, you are expected to turn on a dime and adjust immediately to the world you left behind. This is a great injustice and one that cannot be ignored.

My amendment is very simple. It would allow a guardsman to accrue bonus leave when he or she was placed on active duty for 6 months. This would give guardsmen more leave by altering how training days for the National Guard and Reserve are counted for the purposes of determining their leave. Currently, any training less than 29 consecutive days does not count toward accrual of leave.

This amendment would change current policy when a guardsman is placed on active duty for a period of 180 consecutive days. Upon that 180th consecu-

tive day of active duty, all previous days spent training in the past 5 years, no matter their duration, would be counted for the purpose of determining how many days of leave the guardsmen would have. This would effectively give the guardsmen and reservist a bonus period of leave when they were deployed for longer than 6 months.

The look-back period for determining the new leave, as I mentioned, would be capped at 5 years. This would prevent substantial disparities in accrued leave from occurring between a guardsman with 20 years of service and a guardsman with only 3, perhaps.

We must do all we can to ensure our guardsmen are given every opportunity to readjust to life outside of the combat zone. When they return to our arms, we must embrace them and give them the time and the elements they need to readjust themselves. For some, it may be as simple as getting their finances back in order or perhaps spending time with their spouse or their children or their extended family. Maybe it is getting re-equipped back in their household or in their community. Maybe it is getting re-engaged, remembering those people who surround them who can provide them the unconditional love and support they need to put behind them the experiences they may have had, so they can look forward and be proud of the service they have given and know their country embraces them.

For others, it may be more difficult. Either way, they deserve an opportunity to deal with these issues without having to worry about returning to or finding work in order to put food on the table so soon after giving so much in service to this great country.

Our guardsmen found themselves in two circumstances where they were given passes, but were required to take leave when they have returned now from that 180-plus days of service, of giving their heart and soul to make sure the freedoms we enjoy are protected.

We should do all we can to make sure as they come back into our American communities, they come back into their families, they can do it with dignity and the support of this great country and the military service they have served.

I urge the Senate to adopt my amendment. I ask my colleagues to take a look at it. I think it is very simple and something we could do without much folderol. We could get it done and make sure all these soldiers are well taken care of.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise to talk a little bit regretfully about the issue of immigration—regretfully, because the supplemental Defense bill that came out of the House of Representatives included the issue of immigration and therefore has opened it up for discussion here in the Senate.

Tonight I rise in support of the Craig amendment which will enact important reforms to the H-2A program that will help ensure Ohio's agricultural industry remains strong and vibrant. That has a lot to do with immigration.

Agribusiness is the largest industry in the State of Ohio, contributing \$73 billion to our economy each year. I would like to keep it that way. My State ranks sixth nationally in the production of nursery and greenhouse crops, with a value of over a half billion dollars. We grow almost a quarter of a billion dollars worth of fruits and vegetables each year.

I want to stress how important these businesses are to Ohio and how vulnerable they are. These industries live and die in a very competitive marketplace, and having a stable and sufficient workforce is vital to their competitiveness in the global marketplace. Unfortunately, right now they have a major labor crisis. Without the guest workers who are essential to getting work done during peak seasons, agribusiness in Ohio as well as the rest of the country simply would not have the workforce necessary to do their work and their customers would have to look elsewhere, very likely to overseas businesses for agricultural products.

I am told in the early 1990s our Nation exported twice the value of nursery and greenhouse crops to Canada than we imported. In the last decade, Canada has overtaken us, and now the numbers have reversed, adding to our Nation's trade deficit. I would like to note that our neighbor, Ontario, has a very good guest worker program.

If we offshore our fruit, vegetable, nursery crops, and other production to Mexico and Canada, think of what we lose. We lose control of our food supply, and you know that is a national security issue. We lose jobs, and not just farmworker jobs. Agricultural economists tell us each farmworker job in these industries supports 3½ jobs in the surrounding economy: processing, packaging, transportation, equipment, supplies, lending, and insurance. They are good jobs, filled by Americans. We lose them if we do not do this the right way.

Work in these industries in Ohio is seasonal, demanding, and out in the weather. Many of our producers have tried to use the existing H-2A program. This is especially true of our nursery, sod, and Christmas tree growers. They represent 79 percent of the H-2A use in Ohio.

The program is expensive, bureaucratic, and a litigation nightmare—that is the current program. The program is failing and it needs fixing. Many agricultural employers would like to use the program but do not because of the uncertainty associated with the program. Not having access to legal, timely workers hurts these businesses. Crops are lost because workers are not available for the harvest. I understand from my colleague Senator CRAIG that out in California lettuce is